DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 579 CS 209 478

AUTHOR	Davis, Ken, Ed.
TITLE	Writing by Imitation.
INSTITUTION	Kentucky Council of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE	84
NOTE	74p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801 (Stock No. 59060, $2.00 member, $2.50 nonmember).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Kentucky English Bulletin; v34 n1 Fall 1984
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; *Imitation; *Models; *Teaching Methods; Writing (Composition); Writing Improvement; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal issue present a wide range of theoretical and practical approaches to helping students benefit from imitating products and processes of writing. The eight articles discuss the following topics: (1) imitating models, (2) summary writing as an aid to using writing models, (3) rewriting "Indian Lad" to show how to imitate creatively, (4) helping students generate compositions from selections in readers, (5) developing a writing voice through the use of written models, (6) using ineffective student writing to teach revision and editing skills, (7) teaching composition by example, and (8) using the process model approach to teaching writing. This issue also contains an index to volumes 1-33 of the bulletin. (EL)

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WRITING BY IMITATION

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Volume 34 Fall 1984 Number 1

Published by the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English

CS209478

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The Kentucky English Bulletin is published by the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English, with the cooperation and assistance of the Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Kentucky. Subscription is included in KCTE membership dues ($6), which should be sent to Ruth Redel, Elizabethtown Community College, Elizabethtown, KY 42701.

The Kentucky English Bulletin is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement.

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INTRODUCTION:
WRITING BY IMITATION

Imitation, a classic technique for the teaching and learning of composition, is having an exciting revival, as teachers of both "creative" and "expository" writing, at all levels, are exploring new uses of models. The eight articles in this issue further this revival, presenting a wide range of theoretical and practical approaches to helping students benefit from imitating products and processes of writing. We hope you find these approaches useful in your own teaching.

This issue marks the first third-century of the Kentucky English Bulletin, so it appropriately includes an index to all past issues. Please note that many of these issues are still available, in single copies and classroom sets. Special thanks to Debra Johnson-Farhat for compiling the list.

Please note, also, the call for articles for 1985-86, found on the last page of this issue.

Ken Davis

THE IMITATION OF MODELS

Richard M. Eastman, North Central College-Naperville

Nobody would accuse an art student of merely "copying" when drawing from a posed model. Actually, drawing the model can teach a perceptive student how to generalize and differentiate the human anatomy, thus acquiring insight which transfers to the artist's total talent.

Writers also learn from models. Benjamin Franklin described his own practice:

> About this time I met with an odd volume of the Spectator. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With that view I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my Spectator with the original, discovered some of my faults and corrected them. (Autobiography, 1771-1790)

Of course a writer who imitates slavishly will learn only a bag of tricks. Worse, the imitator's writing will become only a xerox of someone else's thought. But imitation, practiced well, opens up these benefits: 1) greater sensitivity to language; 2) broadening of one's own stylistic powers; 3) new flexibility in the revision of one's own work.

Total Imitation

The perfect imitation of a given passage would simply be an exact duplicate of that passage. Some teachers and writing coaches do recommend the word-for-word copying of selected passages, or writing down such passages to dictation. One argument for such practice is that language ought to enter as many channels of the student's perception as possible. The student hears the style of a master, rather than merely scanning it with the eyes, and feels what it is like to write that style. The immersion of one's hearing and handwriting in a certain author's work can help give a sense of the way in which that author takes hold of things.

For such direct copying or writing to dictation, the whole passage should be read aloud first so that one can feel its sweep and strength. The actual writing should be done by hand slowly, without abbreviation or scrawling, but not for so long at once that the mind begins to wander.

Selective Imitation

Most imitative writing is selective rather than total. From the model, the writer picks out a cluster of distinctive features to imitate--such as its distinctive vocabulary, or sentence structure, or approach to audience. This alone is what the imitator works with.

For model, the following passage has been drawn from Upton Sinclair's novel on the meat-packing industry, The Jungle (1906). Sinclair is describing the slaughtering crew as it kills the cattle:

> They worked with furious intensity, literally upon the run--at a pace with which there is nothing to be compared except a football game. It was all highly specialized labor, each man having his task to do; generally this would consist of only two or three specific cuts, and he would pass down the line of fifteen or twenty carcasses, making these cuts upon each. First there came the "butcher," to bleed them; this meant one swift stroke, so swift that you could not see it--only the flash of the knife; and before you could realize it, the man had darted on to the next line, and a stream of bright red was pouring out on the floor. This floor was half an inch deep with blood, in spite of the best efforts of men who kept shovelling it through holes; it must have made the floor slippery, but no one could have guessed this by watching the men at work.

What can be identified as a "cluster of distinctive features" of Sinclair's style here? Any teacher or student may choose from an individual perception of style or from a current topic of composition study, any important omission to be recovered by the post-imitation analysis. Such stylistic points as these might be noted: Sinclair's use of analogy (the football game); his use of contrasting vocabularies (that stressing "work" and that stressing "slaughter"); his selection of detail (vividness of killing, impersonality of workers); the neutrality of authorial presence; the use of sentences as organizing units (one sentence for each phase of slaughter).

Having completed such observations, the imitator can apply selective imitation in two ways. The passage can be scrambled and then re-synthesized. Or its distinctive features can be adapted to new material.

Scrambling and Re-Synthesis

To scramble the passage in writing, one can follow Franklin's procedure of writing down "hints" or notes on the contents of the original passage. The original wording should be avoided. So should the original ordering--maybe by using notecards for every sentence or two and then shuffling (scrambling) the cards. Scrambled notes on the Sinclair passage might look like this on four cards (now in random order):

> Blood 1/2 inch on floor, though men keep shovelling it through holes. Spectator would not know floor was slippery, men keep at work.
>
> Killing is specialized labor. Each man specializes in 2-3 cuts, goes down line of 15-20 carcasses.
>
> Killers work furiously and intensely. Analogy of football game.
>
> "Butcher" comes first. Bleeds with one fast stroke, very swift, only a flash visible. Rushes to next carcass as bright red blood streams on floor.

Next, both the notecards and the analysis of distinctive features are set aside at least overnight, so that the imitator can forget the exact wording of the original. Then, without looking at the model, the imitator uses the analysis and scrambled notes to write a re-synthesis. A mechanically perfect result of course would be identical with the model. But in re-synthesis the imitator's own creative urge comes into play,

even in tracking the original material, so that the re-synthesis may show an organic identity of its own, as in the following version which I myself worked out:

RE-SYNTHESIS	ORIGINAL
The work of slaughtering goes on with the fury and intensity of a football game, and also with something of the same high specialization of the players' roles. Each man is an expert in two or three cuts, and goes down the line of fifteen or twenty carcasses delivering the same cuts to each. First is the "butcher," who bleeds the carcass with one deep stroke so fast that only a flash of the knife is visible; he has already rushed on to the next carcass by the time the bright red blood streams onto the floor. The floor runs as much as a half-inch deep in blood, despite the men who keep shovelling it through holes; yet you would not suspect the floor to be slippery, so intently do the men press on at the work.	They worked with furious intensity, literally upon the run--at a pace with which there is nothing to be compared except a football game. It was all highly specialized labor, each man having his task to do; generally this would consist of only two or three specific cuts, and he would pass down the line of fifteen or twenty carcasses, making these cuts upon each. First there came the "butcher," to bleed them; this meant one swift stroke, so swift that you could not see it--only the flash of the knife; and before you could realize it, the man had darted on to the next line, and a stream of bright red was pouring out upon the floor. This floor was half an inch deep with blood, in spite of the best efforts of men who kept shovelling it through holes; it must have made the floor slippery, but no one could have guessed this by watching the men at work.

The difference between the two versions now allows the imitator to grow as a critic. The final step is to compare the two versions to appreciate the uniqueness of each. For example, one might note that the re-synthesis is 25 words shorter (15 percent less) than the original. Why is this? Mainly because the re-synthesis eliminates several leisurely and even wordy structures of the original—thus:

RE-SYNTHESIS	ORIGINAL
...with the fury and intensity of a football game...	...with furious intensity, literally on the run--at a pace with which there is nothing to be compared except a football game.

Each man is an expert in two or three cuts...	...each man having his task to do; generally this would consist of only two or three specific cuts...

In the original, such structures tend to enhance the calm deliberateness of the writer. The re-synthesis implies more excitement. Again, one might note that the re-synthesis takes the present tense. Evidently the imitator forgot that the original passage came from a novel written in conventional past tense. The present tense heightens the immediacy and the excitement of the account. Once again the re-synthesis lacks something of the calm stance of Sinclair's original. And so on. The chief benefit of this final comparison is that the imitator can firm up the earlier analysis and can see more exactly what outlook Sinclair's style was expressing.

Adaptation of Technique to New Subject Matter

In the second type of selective imitation, one would still need to work out the same analysis of stylistic features in the original. But now one doesn't need to make notes summarizing the content of the model passage. Instead, the imitator searches for new subject matter on which to promote the stylistic traits of the original—new material which will offer the same kind of opportunities.

For example, Sinclair contrasts the shocking violence of cattle slaughter with its systematic procedure. That contrast is central to his way of seeing the meatpacking industry. What other subject might offer the same contrast of violence and system? The mass execution of prisoners? The wreckers' dismantling of a grand old mansion? Police subduing a mob? One might try professional wrestling, which has been called "programmed frenzy."

The next step would be to look for all the correspondences between the imitator's chosen subject and the Sinclair original. In this example one would look for all the parallels between cattle slaughtering and wrestling, to come up with an informal table like this:

FEATURES OF SLAUGHTERING	PARALLEL FEATURES OF WRESTLING
slaughter of cattle	vanquishing of professional wrestlers
intensity of labor	intensity of labor
analogy of football game	analogy of slaughterhouse

the "butcher"	the "villain" wrestler
his bleeding of a carcass	his demolishing of a foe
bloody floor (brutal disorder)	screaming hall (brutal disorder)

Then, using this table and the analysis of the Sinclair passage, the imitator would write an adaptation (without consulting the original; that would only encourage mere echoing). My own result went like this:

ADAPTATION

The wrestlers fought the whole evening with the unabating fury of slaughterers in a meat-packing factory; yet this mayhem was a highly organized activity in which each combatant had a specialty—villain, outraged hero, Oriental exotic, Alaskan brute, declassed aristocrat, and so on. Most prominent was the villain, who deftly slipped past the referee's restraining arms to slug his unready opponent, then fell on the limp body to choke him in plain view of everyone but the referee, then flopped the victim on his back for the referee's three-count which determined victory. Before the audience fully absorbed the atrocity the victim was lugged off stage and the malevolent victor had duly swaggered through the ropes. Then despite the enraged screams of a hall which no referee nor ushers could still, the next combatants had marched in and faced off for their own gladiatorial chores.

ORIGINAL

They worked with furious intensity, literally upon the run—at a pace with which there is nothing to be compared except a football game. It was all highly specialized labor, each man having his task to do; generally this would consist of only two or three specific cuts, and he would pass down the line of fifteen or twenty carcasses, making these cuts upon each. First came the "butcher," to bleed them; this meant one swift stroke, so swift that you could not see it—only the flash of the knife; and before you could realize it, the man had darted on to the next line, and a stream of bright red was pouring out upon the floor. This floor was half an inch deep with blood, in spite of the best efforts of men who kept shovelling it through holes; it must have made the floor slippery, but no one could have guessed this by watching the men at work.

The final step, once again, is to compare the imitation with the original. Now the contrast will be harder, since a difference in subject matter was stipulated. Still, by noting the particulars of treatment, one can see, for example, that the adaptation refers to people by nouns which are more specific, more dramatic. Where Sinclair restricts his nouns to "men" or "man" (with "butcher" as the one exception), the adaptation uses "wrestlers," "combatants," "villain," "hero," "exotic," "brute," "aristocrat," and so on. Thus the adaptation lacks some of the abstract impersonality which creates the tone of understatement in Sinclair's original text.

Again, the adaptation uses much more main-clause emphasis for the key values of violence and efficiency:

ADAPTATION	ORIGINAL
This mayhem was a highly organized activity.	It was all highly specialized labor. ("It" is colorless beside "mayhem.")
The victor had dully swaggered through the ropes.... The next combatants had marched in and faced off. (Three verb positions for describing the end of the action.)	The man had darted on to the next line. (Only one verb position for describing the end of the action.)

So in this second way the overvigorous adaptation misses the understatement of the original; elsewhere it seems reasonably successful.

Parody

One can use this method of imitative adaptation for comic effect by exaggerating (rather than merely copying) the most conspicuous features of the original, applying them to materials which are completely inappropriate. The result is parody. The titanic but understated violence of Sinclair's slaughterhouse might be unleashed in a campus kitchen:

> The University Food Service Opens Its Season
> (with apologies to Upton Sinclair)
>
> Back in the Union kitchen the chefs toiled with the savage concentration of a football team on the

> offensive. Their tactics for the dietitian's favorite main course of Salisbury Steak au corbeau were all highly specialized, with each chef having his own "play" to run. Here came the gravy chef to douse the mashed potatoes. This meant one swift dollop from his bucket--so swift that you could see only the flash of his ladle. Then the chef whisked down to the next plate, and a stream of dark brown was pouring on the floor. The floor was inches deep with gravy, potatoes, and gouts of meat despite the best efforts of cooks who kept swabbing it off, often slipping but heaving themselves up again, stained and steamy.

Like most laboratory demonstrations of humor-making, this example may be less than hilarious. But the technique is there. The title and the apology give signals, needed early along the line, that a takeoff is under way. The original incongruity of Sinclair's action with his setting is magnified by choosing a campus dining hall, supposedly a center of gracious living, and invading its kitchen with a garbageman's nightmare.

Parody that focuses on a small original sampling, as in that illustration, needs to imitate the original closely. But parody is free to adopt a different scale from the original. It often abbreviates. It may adopt a different literary style, as in using Marcel Proust's luscious prose, say, to a rugged incident from Ernest Hemingway--a possible two-way parody. Parody may use a different literary type, as in using a dramatic skit to satirize a novel. In short, parody may use any device which can throw into high relief the target qualities of the original. And these target qualities may range from some quirk of expression to the total personality of the original writer.

By trying such tricks with an author of conspicuous manner, one can enjoy the malicious pleasures of literary takeoff while at the same time enlarging one's own stylistic resources. Students wishing to explore this delightful art might sample the following:

Donald Ogden Stewart, A Parody Outline of History (1921).

Robert P. Falk, ed., The Antic Muse: American Writers in Parody (1955).

Dwight Macdonald, ed., Parodies: An Anthology from Chaucer to Beerbohm--and After (1960).

Frederick C. Crews, The Pooh Perplex (parodies of scholarship) (1963).

S. J. Perelman, various collections of comic pieces including assorted parodies.

The library card catalog under "Parody" may yield other titles as well.

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SUMMARY:
AN AID TO USING WRITING MODELS

Kathy Griffith Fish, Cumberland College

Summary writing has long been used in the composition classroom, but too often it has served only to check up on students' reading ability or, more bluntly, their commitment to the course. In fact, summary writing may be a key teaching method because the procedure unites those two all-important skills of reading and writing while it teaches the students socratically, forcing them to find information and learn from that information themselves. If students can be taught to take an active role in locating a sample's structure of major and minor ideas, if they can recognize the author's use of organization and stylistic devices, the students' familiarity with the summarized material can demonstrate itself in their own writing. They become able to emulate or imitate what they have summarized because they understand its structure. Their enforced interaction with the model, be it a professional essay, newspaper article, or short story, helps the students refer to the model as they compose their theses and subtopics, use examples and transitions, and vary their sentence structures.

Unfortunately, most average composition students, even at the college level, cannot write successful summaries by themselves. They can usually locate the central idea but lack the self-discipline and skill to connect major and minor ideas and sketch the material out in an original paragraph or two. Thus, the teacher may need to provide a systematic program to show students how to find ideas in a sample piece of writing and to control what these students write about the sample. The following five-step program of controlled summary writing was used in both native speaker and international student sections of introductory college composition classes where approximately

one out of every three class periods was spent discussing an expository model.

The purpose of a controlled program of summary writing is to gradually wean students away from the help of the instructor while preventing them from forming bad habits as they learn. In the first step, the instructor can guide the students by using the blackboard or overhead projector screen to compose a reasonably detailed outline of the writing model. This procedure may take nearly a class hour, for students will inevitably answer questions about organization glibly or will, with heads buried in books, search endlessly for something as easily recognized as the first sentence in paragraph two. However, the result is that students are shown which ideas should be included and which are insignificant enough to delete.

At this point the teacher should forestall three common errors of summary writing: use of the author's vocabulary, excessive length, and inclusion of ideas only tangentially related to the model.

If students are aware that they are expected to eventually imitate the writing models, they may not see that this first, most critical error is wrong. Most students have not studied language enough to recognize the differences in style, structure, and diction from one writer to another. Thus, when asked to put something written by a professional in "their own words," they will only alter the function words or will simply rearrange the sentence parts. Proper nouns may become pronouns or present tense may be shifted to past. These are not substantial changes, but several impromptu exercises can help the students see the differences between their wording and a professional's. First, when called on, they can tell the class what a sentence says after closing their texts, thereby removing the source as a crutch. At another time, the teacher can write a sentence from the text on the blackboard and demand that students reproduce the meaning of the sentence without using a single word, even a "the" or an "of," from the original. The instructor can also use class time to talk about sentence variety by requiring students to change sentence structures so that, for example, a relative clause becomes an appositive or a subordinate adverbial clause becomes a participial phrase.

After completing the class discussion in which an outline has been created, students may feel that they know the model "by heart" even though the instructor may have supplied much of the information. This familiarity is, of course, the point. However, the students aren't finished yet; their assignment for the next period should be to compose a paragraph summary using

the class notes from the blackboard or overhead. Most students will rely too heavily on the wording that the class created together, but at least they are not plagiarizing the author, and they can move away more easily from a classmate's wording which resembles their own than from the original wording which sounds so exact and professional.

Students, especially diligent ones, will somehow create summaries longer than the original article. The teacher can eliminate this second error of summary writing by assigning a sentence length, for example, three sentences per one major idea or one sentence per original paragraph. At this point, students generally need to be told how each sentence in the summary should function. (Sentence #1 states the thesis, sentence #2 gives the first subtopic; sentence #3 summarizes the extended example, and so forth.) They also need to be reminded repeatedly that their summaries should only include those points discussed in class. Students may bring in unimportant details from the writing model or, worse, their own ideas on the professional author's subject.

The teacher can decide whether to allow students to use their texts either during the class discussion or during the composition of the summary. Banning books allows students to avoid the author's wording, but class discussion will be nonexistent if students cannot remember clearly what they have read. The teacher can also divide the first step into two: making class outlines first with books and then without.

When students have mastered the technique of putting a class outline into prose form, they are ready for the second step of compiling their own outlines in smaller groups. By allowing students to work together, the chances of them correctly sorting major points from minor and then arranging these points in a coherent outline are increased, yet they are not totally dependent on the teacher for guidance. Nevertheless, the instructor will still need to carefully monitor the proceedings in each group. Once again the teacher should require that a summary be written based on the outline. Once again the teacher should impose a sentence limit and decide whether texts can be used. Students may work slowly at first, but now they have some experience in recognizing the organization of a piece of writing. Clearly the summaries will show which student groups successfully found the structure of the writing model and which did not.

After students are able to produce effective summaries from small group discussions, they are ready for the third step. Now they are required to formulate their own outlines and summaries; however, they can still receive some guidance

through a general class discussion. The teacher may find that the students' interest in talking about a sample of writing is increased, first because they know another summary writing assignment is imminent, and second because the first two steps of the summary writing program have made them more aware of what they are reading. After students have seen the organization working in the selections they've summarized, many can point out the organization in other samples. And they're often eager to show their new skill. In leading class discussion, the teacher will naturally want to discuss the essay's development and point out the important ideas. However, students can be challenged by the deliberate avoidance of the discussion of a certain point which deserves inclusion in a summary or by the lengthy discussion of a minor example from the writing model. The instructor should warn students that the material of the class discussion may be somewhat different from the material in their summaries, thereby forcing them not to rely totally on class discussion in order to understand the writing sample.

Again, the instructor may find imposing a sentence limit helpful although he or she may no longer need to assign each sentence a particular function. Requiring the students to hand in outlines as well as paragraph summaries during the next class period will allow the teacher to locate more quickly any trouble spots a student has in perceiving a model's organization. Most students cannot begin to reduce an essay into their own words until they have made some sort of list of ideas.

In the fourth step, the chronology of assignments is reversed: students compose an outline and summary at home; then the model is discussed in class. However, students are allowed to take their summaries home again and rewrite them if the class discussion indicates that their summaries lack the proper focus. Thus, students are teaching themselves by individually measuring how well they are reading and then writing. This time the teacher may wish to carefully focus the class discussion around the reading's basic structure so that students can indeed check themselves, but he or she will not need to return to the first procedure of actually constructing an outline on the board. After writing summaries in this way several times, most students will be able to read and then summarize without help from the instructor or the class.

By the fifth step in which summaries are handed in before class discussion, students have attained the ability they perhaps should have possessed initially: they can read something and then state succinctly what it says. Students are now teaching themselves because they are finding information alone. Since students are learning by themselves instead of merely half-listening to a frustrated, droning teacher, the learning is more likely to be remembered by the students. The summary-

writing program potentially saves time in the classroom because, by the final steps, students are able to complete a basic examination of outside readings themselves, freeing class time to be devoted to more sophisticated discussions of the themes and implications of the writing piece or of other composition concerns such as grammar, writing style, or library work.

To further build the students' skills, the teacher may increase the difficulty of the reading material or of the writing assignments as the class progresses through the summary writing program. In the beginning, the instructor may want to use readings that call attention to their own structures through transitions, parallelism, and one-subtopic-per-paragraph development. After the students have written several summaries, however, they can be expected to follow longer readings which may employ extended examples, stylistic tangents, or personal narratives used for an expository end. Another method that allows students to increase their abilities while maintaining interest in the summary-writing assignments is composing summaries for different purposes or from different points of view. For example, after students thoroughly understand the differences between their own ideas and those in a writing model, they can write evaluative summaries in which they not only give a digest of the central ideas but also analyze the reading's rhetorical and organizational strengths. The pedagogical goal here is to use the students' critical abilities so that they, in turn, can use successful techniques in their own essays. Of course, another way that the instructor can use the summary writing assignments is by creating opportunities for students to learn to integrate quotations and compose footnotes. This, too, prepares students to organize their English essays as well as papers in other classes.

With a little supervision and application, most students can learn to read something and then condense it into their own words. However, composing summaries is merely a means to the greater end of improving the students' own writing. Obviously, the students receive practice in writing simply by putting pen to paper to create the summary paragraphs. Short summaries handed in every few days can add up to a fair amount of writing practice during the semester. But the greatest chance for the improvement of students' writing lies in the material to be summarized. Students must thoroughly understand and digest what they have read before they can outline or summarize. In the act of digestion, the real learning takes place.

As students become aware of the structure of what they are summarizing, they also become aware of how they can use the same structure and techniques in the themes required in their

composition course. The instructor can facilitate this by introducing the writing samples as models for imitation when they are discussed in class, by gearing assignments to the use of models, and by referring to specific models when a student is revising. An instructor can also do this without using a controlled program of summary writing, but clearly writing by imitation is most successfully done when the student writers are closely acquainted with what they are imitating. Summary writing forces this acquaintanceship. Students come from the model with a greater understanding than they would have had if they were simply coming away from a class discussion or lecture. They have been in close contact with the writing model; they have had to glean information for themselves; therefore, they have a clearer memory of the writing sample's content, style, and structure when they are asked to emulate any of these.

Finally, summary writing not only gives students practice in writing and in seeing the use of different organizational and stylistic patterns at work; it can also increase their sense of audience. They have been both readers and writers in the summary-writing process. They can then see how the author has guided their responses by, for example, placing the thesis at the end or providing a particularly convincing example. Students are better able to recognize the rhetorical relationship between author and reader after completing the necessarily detailed assignment of writing a summary. From there, by copying the devices used by the model authors, students may become more aware of a reader's potential responses and of their obligations to the reader.

Summary writing, then, unites the goals of a composition course. It demands discipline from the students because they must do their own examination and synthesis. Their enforced interaction with the reading material promotes careful reading, clear and precise writing, and an understanding of themselves as readers and writers in relation to a professional model. Thus, summary writing develops the basic skills necessary to carry students through the English classroom and beyond.

IMITATING CREATIVELY: REWRITING "INDIAN LAD"

James S. Mullican, Indiana State University

Imitation seems the opposite of creativity. But, in a sense, creativity flows from imitation, since creativity involves taking old materials and putting them together in new ways. One way to write creatively is to imitate an old pattern, while at the same time altering the pattern selectively and imaginatively. As teachers of English and the language arts, we need to find ways to induce our students to imitate creatively.

A few summers ago, I was fortunate enough to discover a passage of writing suitable for selective and imaginative imitation. Since that time, I have used the passage with high-school honors students who visit our campus for a two-week seminar each summer. By using the material provided in the passage and following the order of presentation, while at the same time changing the persona and style, my students have produced writing that I consider interesting and imaginative. Through discussion and analysis of their own passages, my students have come to some understanding of the craft of creating something new out of something old. They have also learned that "good writing" is a relative term, depending on the purposes for which we write.

I found the following passage in a church bulletin. Since the item was not documented, I regret to say that I do not know the ultimate source.

> Not long ago the editors of a western newspaper printed a picture of a deserted farmhouse in a desolate, windswept field. Then he offered a prize for the best 100-word essay on the effects

of land erosion. A bright Indian lad from the Southwest won the wampum with this colorful description:

> Picture show white man crazy. He cut down trees. He make too big teepee. He plow hill. Water wash. Wind blow soil. Grass gone. Door gone. Whole place gone to hell. No pig. No corn. No pony.
>
> Indian he no plow land. He keep grass. Buffalo eat grass. Indian eat buffalo. Hide make plenty big teepee. Make moccasin too. All time Indian eat. No work. No hitch-hike. No ask relief. No build dam. No give dam. White man heap crazy.

I begin the exercise by handing out duplicated copies of the foregoing passage under the heading: "Is This Good Writing?" In answer to the question, my students generally answer in the negative, saying that the passage is not good writing because it has so many errors. After students elaborate on this point by identifying the errors, some student usually answers that he likes the passage, since it really gets across its point. Then the tide of discussion turns, and more students find good things to say about the passage. Then, someone remarks that he or she does not believe that an Indian lad really wrote the passage, and, even if he did, he was writing the way Indians talked in old Western movies, not the way Indians actually talk today. Occasionally, a student suggests that the passage may have been written by a professional writer who wanted to sell an amusing filler.

Using this assignment, I have received some papers that I consider imaginative and even delightful, such as the following:

Passage A

> The picture shows that the white man does asinine things. He cuts down the trees to make a house that is too big for his needs. He plows the hills so that the rain washes the top soil away. Then the wind blows the top soil away. Without good soil the grass disappears. The neglected house door falls off. The whole place goes to hell; no longer are there pigs, corn, or ponies.

The Indian doesn't plow the land; he keeps the grass which keeps the soil. The buffalo eats the grass, and the Indian eats the buffalo. Buffalo hide makes a big enough teepee and moccasins. The Indian doesn't go hungry. He doesn't have to work or hitchhike. He doesn't beg for relief. He doesn't build a dam. He doesn't give a damn about things he doesn't need. He thinks the white man is crazy.

--Robin

Passage B

This picture of a deserted farmhouse in the midst of a desolate sandswept field is a perfect example of man's carelessness, crazy in a time of necessary land conservation. Government reports show that our forests are disappearing. Any ride in the country will show one beautiful, huge but seldom-used vacation cabins, built, of course, of "rustic" wood. The barren land where trees once stood are now eroded by wind and water. Grass no longer has a chance to become tall and ripple like waves, as it once did long ago. America is getting wasted and ruined. Wildlife is vanishing, along with the old conventional ways of farming.

Indians respect America as it was and would not plow up the grass. They would leave it there for the buffalo, which are now practically extinct. When a kill would be made, it would be for food or shelter or clothing. With land and animals always available, people would not starve. They wouldn't look for jobs and be discouraged when one couldn't be found. They would have no need to travel, therefore obliterating any foolish idea of hitchhiking or other lowly means of transportation. An Indian wouldn't need welfare. He wouldn't have to build dams because natural lakes would be preserved, which would leave out all government red tape that goes into building a large and expensive structure.

White men in control are in a vicious circle with, the outcome only negative unless they change their values and goals in life.

--Carrie

Passage C

This particular photograph appears to suggest that the strain of the Caucasian race which settled in the Northwestern Hemisphere has severe mental difficulties. The members of the said group have a) stripped the land of its natural forestry, b) made cumbersome places of dwelling, and c) furrowed under the rich top soil on small mounds of earth, causing and assisting the natural process of soil erosion by precipitation and wind.

Because of these irresponsible actions we find vegetation disappearing and the general standard of living lowered. There, too, seems to be a shortage of livestock.

The original inhabitants, however, did not choose to desecrate the land. The vegetation flourishes. The wild bison in turn are nourished by this growth. The hide of these animals is then used by the clever Indian for a place of rest and articles of footwear. This race finds no decreasing supply of nourishment. He need not travel or ask relief of our already overburdened federal government. He does not build unnecessary items for "civilized" living. This race does not possess unnecessary emotional strain.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the white race may have an inbred mental deficiency.

—Gina

Students enjoy hearing such passages read aloud and like to guess what persona each writer has adopted. For a more intensive study of style, I duplicate selected passages, such as A, B, and C, above. In discussions on each passage, students and teacher try to discover just how, in specific terms, each writer has created a persona. Essentially, the tools for creating a persona are diction and sentence structure. Therefore, I ask the students what changes the writers in our class made in diction and sentence structure to change the persona of an "Indian lad" into the persona of someone else. In general, students answer that the diction becomes more abstract and "learned" and the sentences become longer, more complex, and more "correct."

More specifically, the persona of Passage A changes very little from the original. Robin follows the original order of presentation and adds no new information. Her main contribution is to convert sentence fragments and bare-bones sentences into conventional simple and compound sentences. She translates some words: "crazy" becomes "asinine"; the white man's "teepee" becomes a "house." But Robin maintains the flavor of the original passage by retaining some informal diction: she retains "hell" in the first paragraph and "dam"/"damn" in the second, while spelling these words correctly to distinguish between them. Thus, Robin presents the persona of an "Indian lad," post-English-class, somewhat more conventional than the original one.

Carrie, in Passage B, also retains the details and general order of presentation of the original passage, but permits herself some inferences and interpretations. She appropriates "a deserted farmhouse...in a desolate windswept field" from the announcement of the essay contest, subtly incorporating the sentence "Wind blow soil" by substituting "sandswept" for "windswept." The "too big teepee" of the original becomes the "beautiful, huge, but seldom-used vacation cabins, built, of course, of 'rustic' wood." She generalizes the ecological situation and distances herself somewhat from the scene by citing government reports to show that the forests are disappearing. Carrie uses the more abstract term "wildlife" for "buffalo" to further generalize the situation. She is rather poetic in spelling out what is only implied in the original passage, that we have lost much beauty: "Grass no longer has a chance to become tall and ripple like waves, as it once did long ago." Carrie ends her passage with a hopeful note that is not present in the original, suggesting that white people just might "change their values and goals in life."

The sentences in Passage B are more complicated and varied than those in the original or in Passage A. Carrie's essay contains several subordinate clauses and a variety of sentence modifiers. Students who have worked with sentence combining and Christensen's cumulative sentences may profit from identifying sentence modifiers and labelling them more precisely, as, for example, nominative absolutes, verb clusters, and prepositional phrases. But even without such precise analysis, Carrie's diction, sentence structure, and stylistic tone enable her to come across as a rational, sensitive person who has perceived an appalling situation and is able to generalize about it.

The persona of Passage C is perhaps a pompous pedant or a satirist who deliberately uses a stilted vocabulary and sentence structures associated with verbose, learned writing, what Walker Gibson has called "stuffy" talk. In every instance where

the writer could select a simple, concrete word or a high-sounding abstract word, Gina chose the latter. For example:

Original passage	Passage C
Picture	This particular photograph
is crazy	has severe mental difficulties
cut down trees	stripped the land of its natural forestry
too big teepee	cumbersome places of dwelling
grass gone	vegetation disappearing
no give dam	does not possess unnecessary emotional strain

Thus, choice of words is the prime contributor to the pompous, bombastic tone of the passage. But sentence structure also has its contribution to make to the tone, particularly in the second sentence of the passage. In this sentence the parallelism of the compound verbs is emphasized by the classification into a), b), and c). The obvious transitional words ("too," "However," "in conclusion") contribute to the structured, academic look of the passage.

When we have finished these analyses, I find that students are surprised by their rewritings of "Indian Lad." Student writers have intuitively selected the diction and sentence structures needed to create personas that in turn create particular impressions on their readers. Students come to appreciate the craft of writing and to understand that there are specific techniques to achieve their purposes. They also learn to be more relativist in defining good writing. Good writing cannot be defined in the abstract. Good writing is that which achieves its purposes, and writers achieve their purposes by creating personas that in turn create desired impressions upon readers. Finally, students learn that creativity is not merely the product of inspiration. Writers need models, but they need to imitate them creatively.

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For further reading:

Christensen, Francis. "A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence," in Francis Christensen and Bonnie Jean Christensen's Notes Toward a New Rhetoric: Nine Essays for Teachers, Second Edition. New York: Harper & Row, 1978, pp. 23-44.

Gibson, Walker. Persona: A Style Study for Readers and Writers. New York: Random House, 1969.

Gibson, Walker. Tough, Sweet & Stuffy: An Essay on Modern American Prose Styles. Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1966. -24-

HELPING STUDENTS GENERATE COMPOSITIONS FROM SELECTIONS IN READERS: A CASE HISTORY

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Deciding what topics are most likely to elicit the best responses from students in undergraduate writing courses or in other courses where writing is a major component constitutes a crucial and perennial problem. Some fifty years ago at Yale College, in a two-semester course called "Daily Themes," each week students were required to present five themes of three to four pages. About midway through the first semester they were expected to supply their own topics. The fact that once the course got underway the students had to come up with their own subjects must have imposed a real strain on them. At the freshman or even sophomore level today such an expectation--five 300 to 500 word themes every week, with subjects supplied by the students--would be quite unrealistic. In current practice, it is much more common for the instructor to assign topics and allow students varying lengths of time--typically one or two weeks--to work up papers on them. One source of topics for student writing much favored today is readings in collections of edited textbooks designed largely for this purpose. Certainly, the tide of new "readers" outflowing from the publishers each year and reaching its crest in the early spring facilitates the teacher's task in prescribing or recommending to students what they should write about in their themes.

In view of the heavy reliance by composition teachers on readers to supply subject matter for student writing, it may be appropos to note their general characteristics. Most of the books of selections contain explicit or implicit rationales which have served the editors as the control or basis for the pieces they have chosen for inclusion. The rationale, in turn, is often directly associated by the editor of the text with its probable effectiveness in stimulating students to write. A few

statements of such rationales gleaned more or less at random from prefaces of contemporary readers or inferable from their contents will serve to illustrate the editors' views as to what areas of content for the essays, stories, and poems in their collections are most desirable for students to base their compositions on. For example, Laurence Behrens and Leonard J. Rosen (Writing Across the Curriculum, Little, Brown and Co., 1982) believe that students should write on subjects learned in their other courses. David Cavitch (Life Studies, St. Martin's Press, 1983), feels that students should deal with human dimensions and experiences that relate to themselves in society. James Burl Hogins and Robert E. Yarber (Reading, Writing, and Rhetoric, 5th ed., Science Research Associates, Inc., 1983) favor the notion that students should write about major concerns facing the nation in the coming decade. Harold Schecter and Joanna Gormely Semeiks (Discoveries, Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1983) prefer that students respond in their writing to literary works--in this case, short stories organized around the theme of the quest. Incidentally, one rationale for selections that was at high tide in the recent past but which now seems to have ebbed considerably is that of having students write almost exclusively on aspects of language itself.

Although the generic term for the kind of textbooks I have been talking about is "readers," their primary purpose, as I have already intimated, is not so much to improve students' reading ability as it is to better their writing. Claims by their editors for such a result center on two major outcomes: (1) the selections will spark the process of invention and generate both ideas and material for writing; and (2) the selections will function as models for students' own compositions. Almost no collection of the type under discussion omits these justifications which are, in fact, the very raisons d'etre of such books. Since it is the first of these two avowed outcomes that is the chief concern of this presentation, it may be helpful to instance a few actual statements made on this point, again usually in the preface, by editors of recent anthologies.

Paul Eschholz and Alfred Rosa (Outlooks and Insights, St. Martin's Press, 1983) aver that "An essay can...provide students with information and ideas for use in their own writing, or it may stimulate them to pursue new lines of inquiry and to write on new topics of their own." Eric Gould (Reading into Writing, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1983) expresses the belief that "A number of the essays are especially challenging and significant.... All should provoke good reading, conversation, and writing on important themes." Boyd Litzinger (The Heath Reader, C. C. Heath and Co., 1983) declares: "It (the textbook) is, first of all, designed to be a source of ideas for students--a means of

stimulating their minds and memories, of unlocking their own imaginations." Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan (Thinking in Writing, 2nd ed., Alfred A. Knopf, 1983) simply assert, "This book...offers a practical approach to the ever-difficult task of finding new ideas and developing them in composition." And Marcia Stubbs and Sylvan Barnet (The Little, Brown Reader, 3rd ed., Little, Brown and Co., 1983) contend that "The pictures... like the essays, stories, and poems, suggest or provide immediate or nearly immediate experiences for students to write about."

All of these statements by editors of readers, all or most of whom are or have been classroom teachers of English, buttress the hardly startling dictum that good writing is intimately linked to good reading. With the foregoing quotations attesting to the potential contribution of selected readings to creativity by and subject matter for student writers, I wholeheartedly agree. I would, however, inject one cautionary note: Since all of the readers are generally excellent in their own way--and often in the same way--the choice of the textbook, almost irrespective of the rationale for its contents or the actual choice of selections themselves, may not be so crucial as what the teacher does in the classroom with the selections when using them as the principal bases for composition assignments. It is true that the accompanying editorial parphernalia--headnotes and questions and/or suggestions for writing at the end of selections--are frequently of aid to students in launching their papers. But, in my experience, more is needed. That "more" becomes indeed the paramount task for the teacher in getting a student to produce his or her best possible composition, the subject of which has originally been drawn from a single selection from a particular collection of readings chosen for the course.

In practice, as most of us soon find out, a professor has to choose, as well as he or she can pretty much on the basis of subjective judgment, a very limited number of selections for students to work on in a given semester or year. I wish to instance one such selection that I have used and furnish some particulars of my experience with it in my endeavor to get students to generate a composition from it. The reading is "38 Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police" by Martin Gansberg, with which you are probably already familiar. I first encountered this essay in the original edition of Idelle Sullens et al. The Inquiring Reader (C. D. Heath and Co., 1967). Like such pieces as "A Modest Proposal," "Shooting an Elephant," "I Have a Dream," "I Want a Wife" (no necessary connection between these latter two!), "Once More to the Lake," and a handful of others that you can as easily supply, this selection has become a minor classic and continues to appear in anthologies of the

kind we have been considering. (Two recent textbooks, for example, containing the Gansberg essay are Donald Hall and D. L. Emblen, A Writer's Reader, 3rd ed., Little, Brown and Co., 1983, pp. 195-98 and Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell, Patterns for College Writing, 2nd ed., St. Martin's Press, 1983, pp. 60-63.) The article first saw print as a feature story two weeks after the events described, in the March 27, 1964, issue of The New York Times, under the caption "37 (sic) Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police." About half the story was on page one, with the remainder on page two. The story was accompanied by pictures showing scenes from the locale of the brutal stabbings, which occurred in a middle-class neighborhood called Kew Gardens in Queens, New York City. There was no photograph of the victim, Catherine (Kitty) Genovese.

Over the years, I have gathered material on the essay, on the case itself, and on news and other stories referring to the tragedy. These all proved useful later in working with the class on the assignment. But more on that aspect later. On their first contact with the essay which I assigned them to read, the students were not at all "turned on." Despite what I--and, from the evidence, many others--first thought about the article--its human drama, its contemporaneity, its implications for those living in cities, the fundamental concerns of sociology and psychology--despite all these, my students almost never responded strongly to it at first. But this lack of interest--this apparent or real indifference--was hardly a unique phenomenon! For whatever reasons--and I am not even going to speculate on them here--their most typical reaction upon first exposure was not to evince a reaction. My telling them upon first assigning the reading--what they probably already suspected--that their next theme would be based on some aspect of the Gansberg article or upon implications arising from it had no appreciable effect on their interest quotient.

It was at this relatively low point that the materials accumulated over the years came into play and were to become increasingly important. To begin with, I had a copy of the book Thirty-eight Witnesses by A. M. Rosenthal (McGraw-Hill, 1964), now a relatively rare volume. In it, Rosenthal, the Metropolitan Editor of The Times in 1964, explains in detail the provenance of the Gansberg article, the almost unbelievable emotional reaction to it on the part of the reading public, especially in the New York City area (it was almost immediately reprinted in other newspapers across the nation, where it evoked similar response), and the follow-up stories by The Times and other publications. As Rosenthal relates, the idea for the story came to him from a chance remark about "38 witnesses" dropped by the New York City Police Commissioner, Michael Joseph Murphy, in a casual and routine conversation with the Metropolitan Editor.

An old journalistic hand, Rosenthal sensed possibilities, even though the Times had already printed a routine four-column story, relegated to page 23, on the Genovese murder the day after it had occurred. Rosenthal decided to assign the new story to Martin Gansberg, who had long been a rewrite man on the newspaper but who wanted to try his hand as a reporter. The book goes on to tell about Gansberg's own retracing of the investigation, along with detectives, two weeks after the event itself. In all cases, the witnesses--people who had seen or heard various stages of the murder from the safety of their apartments--persisted in their refusal to talk. The book contains a great many clear pictures of the immediate area of the crime and thus further clarifies the descriptions in the Gansberg essay. It also contains a picture of the twenty-eight-year-old victim.

In short, by my telling the class about the way the story was gathered and written, by letting them see pictures of Austin Street, where the attacker first struck, and of the rear of the buildings and stairwell where he administered the final fatal stabbing, and by reading them the comments of psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers in printed interviews and letters to the editor--especially with reference to the whys and wherefores of the apparent apathy on the part of Kitty Genovese's Kew Garden neighbors in her thirty minutes of trauma--by these means, the article--its meaning and implications--began to emerge from the abstraction of the printed page of the reader and to engage the active, not to say fascinated, attention of most members of the class. In other words, there appeared the first visible signs that, in the language the students themselves are likely to use, the drama, as recounted in the essay "hit them where they lived" and, for the first time, they began to see where Gansberg was coming from! At this still relatively early stage in the encounter of the students with the essay and the events it narrates, they could begin to appreciate what A. M. Rosenthal meant when he said at the outset:

> This small book is about a woman I never met but who touched my life as she did the lives of many other people--some tens of thousands, I think. I know very little about her except her name, which was Catherine Genovese, and her age, which was twenty-eight, and the manner of her dying.

During the week or so devoted to getting students involved with the issues raised by the Gansberg piece, I brought to class Xeroxed copies of articles that paralleled or suggested the Genovese case and asked class members to look for such materials in current newspapers and magazines. I asked them

further to be on the lookout for stories that dealt with life and death or other critical situations in which the help or lack of it on the part of bystanders was a crucial factor in the outcome. The cooperative response to this request was invariably gratifying. The thrust of the clippings, those that I had previously gathered and some that the students brought in (which I do not now hold), can be gleaned from the following sampling of captions: "Rotten Doings in the Big Apple" (Bob Green, Sun-Times, Nov. 2, 1977); "A Story Too Late to Help Lost Girl" (Bob Green, Sun-Times, Feb. 6, 1978); "A Chicagoan Who Cared Saves a Life" (Roger Simon, Sun-Times, April 7, 1978); "People Care...Girl Saved in L Attack" (Roger Simon, Sun-Times, April 22, 1978); "Victim Stabbed to Death as 30 Stand By" (Sun-Times, August 25, 1980); and "No One Helps—Man on Subway Tracks is Killed" (Sarah Snyder, Sun-Times, Oct. 8, 1980). The event narrated in Roger Simon's column, "People Care...Girl Saved in L Attack," occurred fourteen years after the murder of Kitty Genovese in Queens. Cathy Riech, aged 26, was saved from a rapist's attack on Chicago's North Side near the turnstyle exit of the El. A determined group of bystanders, who just happened to be in the vicinity that night, heard Cathy's screams and came to her rescue. Towards the middle of the article, Simon recounts for contrast the tragic sequel to Kitty Genovese's similar cries for help when no one called police or came to her rescue. The ending of Simon's article is particularly relevant to the one by Gansberg:

> On the street corner, with the crowd gathered around her, Cathy Rieck gave a little speech. It was only one line.
>
> "Kitty Genovese did not die in vain," she said. Everyone applauded.

During the days devoted to the Gansberg essay, with its rhetorically understated tone, the class and I proceeded to discuss freely and informally many of the aspects and implications of the Genovese case, with special attention given to the different points of view assumed by the various interested—or disinterested—parties. To supplement this phase of the preparation for the 500-1000 word theme that I specified for the assignment, I was helped by coming upon a detailed and authoritative narrative which threw much additional light on the facts and circumstances surrounding the case. It contained, for example, vastly amplified details almost totally absent from the Gansberg account concerning the victim, the murderer (Winston Mosely), the murderer's previous homicides, including that of Annie May Johnson, his accidental arrest, his interrogations, his trial, conviction, and aftermath. This detailed narrative of the Genovese case was from a new

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perspective--that of Albert A. Seedman, at the time newly-appointed deputy inspector in command of the Seventeenth Detective District, later Chief of Homicide, New York City Police Department. The account is a long chapter entitled "The Johnson-Genovese Case" and appears in the book Chief, written by Seedman with the collaboration of Peter Hellman (Avon Books, 1974). The book was put on Learning Resource Center reserve and many students in my class read the chapter on the Genovese case. Unquestionably the opening paragraph of Seedman's version gave them an amplified perspective and deserves to be quoted in full:

> Many crimes have grabbed more headlines at the time they occurred than the murder of Kitty Genovese on the morning of March 13, 1964--certainly, the shooting of Fallon and Finnegan did (subject of the preceding chapter). In fact, her murder did not grab any headlines at all. It appeared at first not to be much different from a thousand other knifings in a city full of blades. But as weeks passed, and the public learned that thirty-eight of Kitty's neighbors awoke to her screams as she was being stalked, but never heeded them, the case took on special meaning. Instead of fading from their minds like most cases, including Fallon-Finnegan, this one grew stronger and more unsettling. A book, a play, TV shows, and a ballad were written about it.

Now that most of the students were involved deeply and intensely in the meaning of Gansberg's essay, it was comparatively easy to enter into the next stage in preparation--bringing in other printed essays by authors who either used the Kitty Genovese incident as a springboard for their own comments and/or explicitly referred to it as a prime example of the issue they were exploring. The object of bringing in the latter essays was, of course, to highlight to the students that Gansberg's account of the last fateful half hour in the life of Kitty Genovese was a fertile seedbed for reflections upon it and reactions to it, and had already been so employed by a large number of writers.

The cumulative effect of my students reading these articles in Xeroxed form may be better appreciated if I cite their titles and give in paraphrase or quotation their respective leading positions or theses. As mentioned, all devote considerable attention to a brief re-telling of Kitty Genovese's story with usually a direct but sometimes an implied reference to Gansberg's famous essay. "The Murder They Heard" by Stanley Milgram and Paul Holland (The Nation, June 15, 1964) takes the position that the moral indignation displayed by people against the thirty-eight is largely misdirected and unjustified. "The Dying Girl

That No One Helped" by Loudon Wainwright (Life, 1964) makes the point that "An examination of the pitiful facts of Miss Genovese's terminal experience makes very necessary the ugly personal question each of us must ask: 'What would I have done?'" "Why People Don't Help in a Crisis" by John M. Darley and Bib Latane (based on authors' joint study which won an award of $1,000 from the Association for the Advancement of Science in 1968) summarizes their findings and states their conclusion in the last two paragraphs as follows:

> Thus, the stereotype of the unconcerned, depersonalized homo urbanus, blandly watching the misfortunes of others, proves inaccurate. Instead, we find that a bystander to an emergency is an anguished individual in genuine doubt, wanting to do the right thing but compelled to make complex decisions under pressure of stress and fear. His reactions are shaped by the actions of others—and all too frequently by their inaction.
>
> And we are that bystander. Caught up by the apparent indifference of others, we may pass by an emergency without helping or even realizing that help is needed. Once we are aware of the influence of those around us, however, we can resist it. We can choose to see distress and step forward to relieve it.

Another essay—and the last I shall mention here—that I used as a kind of pump primer for students in writing their composition on the Kitty Genovese story is "Why Bystanders Won't Help Folks" by Dr. Walt L. Menninger (rept. in Reading, Writing, and Rhetoric, 5th ed., Science Research Associates, Inc., 1983). The advice given by Dr. Menninger to bystanders who witness a person in dire need of assistance is as follows:

> What do you do when someone cries for help? That's ultimately a personal choice. Look carefully for clues to determine whether this is a limited hostile interaction of intimates, or whether it is a dangerous encounter.
>
> If you feel someone should step in, but you don't feel you can do it, call the police or someone who can do so.

After three or four class sessions devoted to the kind of activities sketched in the foregoing paragraphs, most students were energized by their own emotional and mental response.

The tragedy of Kitty Genovese and its relevance to themselves had generally come home to them. Full to overflowing with their subject, their impression was now ready to give way to expression. Finally, they were in a position to appreciate to the full what Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, President and Publisher of the New York Times says in his Introduction to Thirty-eight Witnesses, the book on the Genovese case by his Managing Editor, A. M. Rosenthal:

> Every now and then, a story comes along that stirs our city, makes it think and makes it talk. There have not been many that have moved the city more than the story told in this book, the story of the thirty-eight witnesses. It tells something about our city, but more important, it tells something about each one of us.

The students could respond to this summation because they had come to share its sentiments.

Even after several class periods devoted to the kind of previsioning outlined above, the student still had to go on to the actual writing, with its attendant rewritings and editing. But much of the content, the tone, and the slant had already been "cooking" in each student's head, because the process of writing, as contemporary research, like that of Janet Emig, has shown, is as much recursive as sequential. Creation, moreover, is, as we have all come to be aware, conscious and subconscious. The week or so spent in the classroom and out, with the help and participation of the instructor, usually succeeded in overcoming a student's inertia, galvanizing his or her mental activity, and, in a paraphrase of Whitman's tribute to Emerson, bringing a student from simmering to boil. At a visit in May 1860 to the home of John Townsend Trowbridge, according to Trowbridge in his book My Own Story (1903), the celebrated author of Leaves of Grass told the journalist that the two greatest influences in his life were Italian opera and reading Emerson, adding, "I was simmering, simmering, simmering. Emerson brought me to a boil."

The "boil" to which many students in my writing class were brought as a result of their being stimulated to actualize their thoughts and feelings on matters suggested to them by their assigned reading of "38 Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police" may be adumbrated by simply listing at random some of the titles they came up with for their respective themes:

Non-involvement: A Sensible Way Of Life
The Harsh Lessons of the City
People Do Care

Nobody Really Gives a Damn
The Psychology of Looking the Other Way
Risks in Even Minimum Forms of Involvement
What Ever Happened to the Pioneer Spirit of Mutual Help?
There But for the Grace of God...
Am I My Sister's Keeper?

The foregoing pages mainly describe the previsioning of a theme which students wrote in response to their reading of the Gansberg article. The preparatory process thus set forth is intended as an example of one approach that other teachers may wish to approximate, with suitable variations and improvements of their own.

The example contains, moreover, a number of correlative implications for teachers using materials in readers as springboards for their students in writing themes. For the "case history" to be most helpful, these implications ought to be made rather explicit. Since typical anthologies have a plethora of selections, instructors need to give considerable thought to choosing those that they wish to devote valuable class time to. Different pieces will offer various possibilities to different teachers. Some selections will deal with topics that are already in the field of the teacher's own interests or even expertise. If so, the contents can be more readily made accessible to students. Other inclusions--essays, poems, stories--will strike the alert teacher as possessing a provocative slant that can be redirected to students. Still other selections will contain a distinctive tone perceived by the teacher as sarcastic, whimsical, nostalgic, humorous or dramatic. Stances like these discernible to the teacher can be exploited to evoke responses in students which they can incorporate in their own themes.

For me, the Gansberg essay appeared to offer excellent possibilities of the type mentioned above. My own training and experience in journalism may have inclined me toward it from the outset since the piece originally appeared in a newspaper. I think I developed, along with my students, a heightening awareness of its suppressed drama as we proceeded to explore it. What seemed to us at first to be an inexplicably objective, even unconcerned, air on the part of the narrator came later to be perceived as a deliberate rhetorical strategy calculated to evoke from the reader the utmost feeling of indignation toward the apparent apathy of the 38 and their consequent inaction.

Finally, from the "case history," one conclusion emerges above all: Whatever the teacher's rationale for choosing a particular selection from a reader as the main basis for a student's composition and irrespective of the resources available to the teacher for providing background and giving expanded exposure to a reading, students must become personally involved with the subject before they will "put their whole selves in." To work up a topic, they must be worked up about it. If they are not turned on, we teachers should not be surprised if they give us non-themes--vaporous, bland and uninteresting words merely strung end to end.... So, once more unto the breach, dear friends.

DEVELOPING A WRITING VOICE THROUGH THE USE OF WRITTEN MODELS

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One of the banes of teaching freshman writing courses is reading the many voiceless themes and papers written by our students. What Ken McCrorie dubbed "Engfish" years ago remains alive and unwell in today's composition classrooms. Perhaps the best explanation for the absence of an "authentic voice," to use Donald Stewart's phrase, in such student writing is that most students have a very low level of awareness of the rhetorical situation which informs their writing. Most of my freshman writers have a minimal understanding of how important a writer's purpose is when writing, while their understanding of the importance of an audience, a reader, to the writing process is usually nil. If an awareness of audience, writing purpose, and one's attitude toward the subject or material is necessary to understand fully a rhetorical situation, and thus create an authentic voice, it is little wonder that our students' writing often sounds so lifeless and mechanical.

I have been working in my classes on increasing the students' understanding of the rhetorical situation of their writing and have met with mixed success over the years. However, several years ago, quite serendipitously, I stumbled onto the use of models as an effective means of teaching my students about rhetorical situations. I was preparing to teach my writing class the classification pattern of exposition. While I do not require students to write themes in the various modes of exposition such as classification, comparison/contrast, definition, etc., I do acquaint them with some of these patterns which they then use on occasion when suitable in a piece of their own writing. Unhappy with the samples of classification in the college reader I was using at the time, I decided to compose my own sample which I entitled "The New Four Food Groups." I ran

through these new groups in two pages or so, explaining to my readers the "healthful" advantages of eating foods from the pastry, carbonated beverage, chocolate, and fruits/vegetables group. That fourth group was exemplified by fried onion rings, ketchup, Cracker Jacks, and strawberry bubble gum.

The sample theme worked well in class as it kept the students' attention (my main motivation for making it humorous) while also illustrating the principle of classification. Later in the week, the students submitted their drafts. About a dozen of the twenty-five students had chosen to write classification themes. But the surprising aspect of the papers was that about half of that dozen also chose to write humorous classification essays. These half dozen papers stood out as the most lively, the most interesting, the most alive papers in the entire class.

What then was my discovery? I felt that perhaps I could teach students more about rhetorical situations and thus encourage them to develop authentic writing voices if I asked them to imitate a humorous writing voice. Perhaps, by requiring students to model their writing on a voice they had heard, I could increase their awareness of audience, purpose, and attitude toward subject matter. My own initial doubts about the possibility of using such a technique focused on the likelihood, as I saw it, that I would not be able to teach the students to "write funny," and that they would object to the entire idea. Of course, in the time-honored tradition of students, they did indeed object. But both my students and I discovered quickly that I could indeed teach them to write funny, that most of them had the ability to be amusing on paper--if they first had an opportunity to examine sufficient models of such writing.

Sources of humorous writing proved to be abundant. At one time I was using Kennedy and Kennedy's Bedford Reader and easily uncovered a half dozen humorous essays for use in the class. More recently I have been using St. Martin's anthology of Bedford Prize-Winning Student Essays; here the number of humorous pieces is less abundant, but enough are still available to serve as models. I have also relied heavily on handouts of newspaper and magazine columns and articles. And, finally, I have continued to offer students written samples of my own for modelling purposes. In one such essay, I offered the students a rough draft of mine on a topic which I had generated during one of our in-class free-writing sessions. In addition to focusing on the use of voice in the sample essay, I also used the draft in a revision workshop, asking the students to help me re-write the paper.

When taken in context with the other humorous essays we had been reading, the students discerned several general principles:

the humorists consistently exaggerated, as did one writer who claimed that the number of birds in Lincoln, Nebraska, was in the fifteen digit range; they oversimplified as did the writer who claimed that today's movies are inferior to the movies of the past because today's leading ladies often are taller than their leading men; they liked to lump things into ridiculously named categories such as the writer who objected to the new class of movie monsters which he dubbed "attack of the fluffy puppies"; they liked to "explain" things such as the "Ding Dong Syndrome" which the writers defined as the nervousness of students awaiting the final bell of a fifty-minute class; and they liked to offer ridiculous solutions to ridiculous problems as the "Ding Dong" writer did in suggesting that schools ring their bells for the first forty-nine minutes of class and stop at the end. It was not difficult to elicit these observations from the students in class discussion. Of additional value was showing them my own efforts as if to say "It's not that difficult to be humorous."

I then devised a rather non-threatening assignment designed to encourage them to imitate the humorous voices they had been reading. Here is the relevant portion of the assignment sheet:

> For this assignment please write a paper which is humorous, comical, amusing, or light-hearted in tone. You do not need to make jokes; the idea is simply to create a voice which is not serious or solemn. You may try to be funny or whimsical or sarcastic, etc. For a subject you might check your journals looking for a subject which amuses you or one which angers you or one about which you feel that you know a lot. Please write this paper for an audience of tenth-graders at your old high school. When you analyze this audience, remember that virtually any subject can be made interesting to virtually any audience. In other words, just because you are writing for tenth-graders you do not have to write about break-dancing (or whatever it is that interests tenth-graders!) Select a subject of interest to you; then make it interesting and amusing to them.

This assignment covers all three aspects of the rhetorical situation which I had been trying to teach: the purpose of the piece is primarily to amuse the reader; the audience has been defined for the students in the latter part of the paragraph; the students' own attitude toward their material is suggested in the fourth sentence which suggests some topics to them. Finally, I try to make clear to the class that there is no penalty for not being funny. I wanted my students to understand

that I was not asking them to be Joan Rivers or Woody Allen--unless they wanted to be. I was merely interested in getting them to develop a voice like one of the voices they had heard in their reading, voices which ranged from whimsical to acidly funny. Since I encourage my students to re-write their drafts and indeed do not grade their papers until the end of the semester when they are satisfied with the revisions they have done, I can convince them to be experimental. In other words, the students are being given the license to try something different in this assignment.

The assignment usually results in numbers of interesting and amusing essays. Here are two excerpts from the same paper written for this assignment:

> I'm mad as hell! People these days just don't seem to know how to drive. I sometimes wonder whether they didn't go buy their drivers licenses at a K-Mart blue light special. For instance, just the other day I was tooling down the road going the normal speed limit. When all of a sudden some lady pulled out in front of me and proceeded to go fifteen miles per hour under the speed limit. (He then offers methods of coping with these bad drivers) ... If you still cant see yourself using one of these ideas I have one last alternative. It is so semple you probably would of never thought of it. Buy a tank. Now it doesn't have to be anything fancy. I have heard that the American tanks are the best buy for your money. No tanks are cheap, but imagine the look on those idiot drivers faces when they find out they have pulled out in front of a tank. When that happens just load the cannon and fire. There would be no hurry either. The range of one of those guns must be a couple of miles. Just when the offender thinks he's gotten away with pulling out in front of a tank, let him have it. He wont be pulling out in front of anybody else ever again. But what about Mr. Parking Space Hogger? Taking up two spaces as usual. All you need to do is build up a little momentum and I'm sure the tank will fit in any slot you want it to.

In this brief excerpt, it is easy to see the lessons the student has learned about writing humorously, lessons in structure, exaggeration, oversimplification. While the writing has problems both mechanical and stylistic, it also has a voice. This student has clearly learned something about developing an authentic voice.

Later in the same year, in a second writing course, one based on reading literature, the same student demonstrated again that he had learned something about voice in writing. Early in this second course, he tried to write "college papers"; in other words, he lapsed back into Engfish.

> "My Oedipus Complex" by Frank O'Connor is a facinating story in many different ways. It is unique the way he plays on the readers' emotion to make the theme of the story effective. Mr. O'Connor tries to make the reader feel strongly in one way or another about one of the three main characters. While reading the story he has succeeded in making the readers feel for the characters. The way he has succeeded is by taking a character and making the reader feel strongly about the character.

Here he has said nothing of any real substance; the prose is lifeless as well as pointless.

After some discussion in a conference, the student recognized that he had to re-establish for himself the rhetorical situation in his writing: why was he writing? how did he feel about the subject? who was his audience? And thus a few papers later, falling back in this case not only on what he had learned about writing by writing humorously but also falling back on the humorous voice he felt comfortable with, he produced this paper:

> While I was waiting in the lunch line the other day, this guy cut in front of me, and neglected to give any explanation or apology. So being the model lunchline participant that I am, I told him that the line started behind me. Well, this guy must have been a real moron because he said he was there before I was. Since he was built like a refrigerator, I let it go at that. But this is just one example of how ignorant some people can be. As a matter of fact, there are more than just "some" ignorant people in this world, they are too numerous to count. In fact, there are so many ignorant people that stories are being written about them constantly. It's bad enough dealing with these people daily, without reading about them too. What is the world coming to? If something isn't done soon the world will be unfit for human existence. All the newspapers will be full of ignorance. The world will become one big population of dumb people. It could be worse than "The Day After."

> While reading some stories assigned to me during my English class, I encountered more and more ignorant people. The more stories I read, the more dumb people I found. In a story entitled The Moon and Sixpence, I found quite a few ignorant people. For instance there was Mrs. Strickland. Boy was she dumb! She couldn't figure out that her beloved Charles didn't want anything to do with her. After he left her she wanted him back and was willing to forgive him for everything he had done ... If that's not ignorance, I don't know what is ...

Despite its problems with punctuation and pacing, this passage is very much alive; there is an audible voice. This student has found a way to discuss the literature so that it matters to him. He is specific here and, as his use of punctuation (note quotation marks, exclamation marks, question marks) and technique (he uses allusion, simile, exemplification) indicates, he is in control of the material. This is quite simply better writing than his other literary paper.

There are, I think, a number of distinct advantages to assigning students to imitate humorous writing, advantages which are demonstrated by the passages about The Moon and Sixpence and the tank.

1. Students gain awareness of audience. It is difficult to conceive of a writer attempting to be humorous without considering her audience. Whether we think of a stand-up comic, a comedic playwright, a newspaper columnist, a talk show raconteur, or a student in a composition course, the whole point of their attempts to be humorous is to provoke a response on the part of the audience, to get a laugh or cause a smile. Thus a very basic understanding of audience is a pre-requisite to humorous writing and the assignment becomes a simple and effective way to make student writers think about their readers as they write.

2. Students become specific in their writing. Note the wealth of detail in the tank passage as the student discusses the advantages of the tank, the best make to buy, the tank's range, its applications, etc. Likewise, the writer tells us more about Mrs. Strickland than he does about any of Frank O'Connor's characters in his earlier literary paper. It seems difficult to conceive of a humorous paper which would not be specific. The students quickly learn that no one will find their character sketch of crazy old Uncle Charlie funny if it reads "Uncle Charlie always wore outrageous clothes and did outlandish things." The writer simply must describe the clothes and offer an anecdote or example of Uncle Charlie's behavior to elicit the smile or laugh. Thus humorous writing assignments

help make important points about developing ideas through the use of specifics.

3. Students learn how to "claim their subject." Donald Murray argues in his writings and speeches that writers have to find a way to take a subject and claim it as their own; in other words, writers must find a way to stamp their own individuality on their writing. Writing humorously helps students do so. Many of my students complain that they have nothing to write about, that they do not know enough about anything interesting, that their lives are too ordinary. I don't agree, but such perceptions seem common on the part of the students. By writing humorously, the students present their "ordinary, dull" information in a new and interesting way. It may be old wine, but it is a new bottle: the humor gives the students a means of becoming interested in—and interesting about—their subjects. The entire excerpt about The Moon and Sixpence serves as a good example of how a student has "claimed" his subject.

4. Students learn about organizing their writing. Because so many of the models they see of humorous writing use recognizable structural plans, such as classification, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, definition, students learn to use the same patterns at appropriate times. The tank excerpt is a cause/effect problem-solving piece of writing, for example.

5. Students learn about the ethical responsibilities of the writer to his/her readers. Some students have objected to the glorification of violence in the tank essay; others have objected to the oversimplification of Mrs. Strickland as "ignorant." The questions of when exaggeration becomes lying or when classifying becomes harmful stereotyping are other issues which have arisen while we discuss the humorous writing. These are important questions to consider because the writer does have ethical obligations to the reader. But in order to recognize these obligations, writers must first be more conscious of their readers; the humorous writing assignments I have given encourage that awareness and increase the students' consciousness of their ethical responsibilities as writers.

Because this idea of teaching students to learn about audience, purpose, and voice through the use of models seems to work in my classes, I have recently attempted to extend this approach by asking students to imitate other voices: angry voices, expert voices. But underlying all of the modeling remains one basic assumption: good writing is writing which demonstrates an authentic voice. Where I had once believed that students had first to learn how to be aware of audience, purpose, and subject in order to develop a voice, I am now convinced that

they can imitate a voice and thus learn to be aware of audience, purpose, and subject through the very act of modeling. This increased awareness then leads, I believe, to more--and original--authentic voices in the student's subsequent writing. In short, the student becomes a better writer.

ANTITHETICAL MODELS: USING INEFFECTIVE STUDENT WRITING TO TEACH REVISION AND EDITING SKILLS

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The use of models for the teaching of composition began in antiquity and was recommended by some of the most revered educators of Greece and Rome. Isocrates, for instance, the Greek schoolmaster who is believed to have been both Socrates' pupil and Plato's rival, furnished his students copies of great orations as well as of speeches he himself had written; the Roman-educated Quintilian also advocated the imitation of renowned authors (Power 111, 189). The use of models has, what is more, survived the centuries, having endured--judging from the continuing influx of college-level "composition readers"--in spite of the often remarkable pedagogical fluctuations of American educational thought and practice. Muriel Harris, in a recent issue of College English, even proposes that writing instructors provide not mere models of written products but demonstrations of their own writing processes as well, a proposal that is a more than adequate response to Erika Lindemann's criticism of certain uses of models: "Forms practiced by rote or imitation may not become internalized...if the teacher explains only what the form is and not how to reproduce it" (242). But proponents of writing-by-imitation do have their adversaries, one notable example being James Moffett, who believes not only that "there is no evidence that analyzing how some famous writer admirably dispatched a problem will help a student recognize and solve his writing problems" but also that "models...merely intimidate some students by implying a kind of competition in which they are bound to lose" 9208). He feels, furthermore, that the prewriting dissection and examination of written products--an activity he aptly refers to as "decomposition"--"represents serious tampering with the compositional process" (206-207).

My own classroom experimentation with the conscious, pre-writing examination of prose models supports Moffett's contentions, in that resultant student writing either revealed no influence whatsoever from professional models meticulously analyzed or, conversely, took the form of poor imitations of these models, often with entire phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from the originals appearing in illogical spots. When these models were classified according to the traditional modes of discourse, the problem was compounded: Such an artificial arrangement tended to create a distorted view of written products that actually discouraged the generation of content, since students quickly concluded that each type of writing existed only in isolation—that description and narration, being impressionistic, and exposition, being "factual," were exempt from logical presentation and examination and, worse, that the persuasive mode precluded the creative use of description, narration, and exposition. I have not found the introduction of models per se to be totally ineffective, however, and have, in fact, discovered that certain modifications to the traditional interpretation of writing-from-models can produce an approach to the teaching of composition that often profoundly increases the communicative strength of student texts.

The first adjustment involves timing, or, more precisely, the transfer of prose models from the teacher-directed prewriting stage to the teacher-directed revision stage. For if the introduction of models prior to the generation of content and the discovery of form serves mainly, where there is any discernible effect at all, to discourage, stifle, and confuse, the introduction of such material following the compilation of the first draft seems to elicit only positive results, primarily, I believe, because each student has in hand at this point a piece of his or her own writing—which was produced unhampered by vague notions of "acceptable" content and "established" patterns of development—to be examined alongside other completed texts. I have found also that students benefit greatly from the inclusion of ineffective writing samples in conjunction with or in lieu of samples of exemplary writing, a technique which Aristotle uses in the Rhetoric but which is limited primarily to the examination of contextless details of style, as in the following example from Book III, Chapter 10: "...we must neither speak casually about weighty matters, nor solemnly about trivial ones; nor must we add ornamental epithets to commonplace nouns, or the effect will be comic, as in the works of Cleophon, who can use phrases as absurd as 'O queenly fig-tree'" (178).

Antithetical models seem, in addition, especially useful to student writers when these models are themselves the work of student writers. More specifically, ineffective student models

have, in my experience, proven superior to other types of models for several reasons:

1. Exposure to incomplete or distorted texts allows students to experience as readers the kind of frustration that can hinder if not totally prevent communication, a frustration of which those exposed only to exemplary professional samples or near-professional student texts may forever remain oblivious. Closer analysis of these antithetical models, furthermore, by focusing attention on actual unarticulated details, transitions, and connections, provides an even more enlightening introduction to comprehension problems created by careless omissions and unexamined assumptions.

2. Exposure to essays written in response to the kinds of topics, or the very topics, actually assigned in a given composition course enables students to conceive of a connection between the initial information supplied by an instructor and the finished product, thus avoiding the kind of confusion that so often results when only irrelevant models are available. I have found, for instance, that few freshman readers contain appropriate examples of critical essays, even though writing assignments in numerous freshman and sophomore English courses hinge exclusively on the ability to analyze poems, short stories, novels, plays, and literary essays and to substantiate conclusions by direct references to these works themselves. Imitation of the kinds of emotive prose models appearing in most essay collections is, moreover, poor preparation for students who will eventually be required to write essays in other disciplines. Even Sommers and McQuade's otherwise useful Student Writers at Work contains few pieces of writing that acknowledge any body of information beyond individual writers' own impressions and experiences.

3. Exposure to the actual written products of young writers with equivalent linguistic and educational backgrounds permits students to encounter as readers and to manipulate as editors the kinds of nontraditional surface

structures that they themselves produce. In the case of students whose native dialects include forms that diverge significantly from standard English lexical equivalents, for instance, as in Appalachian a-verbing or the black English null copula, the opportunity to examine written derivatives of relevant nonstandard forms, not in isolation, but in the context of a student writer's overall message, allows nonstandard speakers to experience the disorientation such forms can produce for readers who are competent in the relevant nonstandard systems as well as for readers who are not. The prefabricated, often bizarre imitations of poor student writing appearing in some composition textbooks and workbooks, on the other hand, not only can confuse students by introducing "errors" they would never produce while ignoring those surface features that are indeed troublesome but can also be a profound waste of valuable instructional time.

4. Exposure to the unsuccessful efforts of other student writers provides a distance between writer and product that is often not possible when beginning writers are asked simply to examine and revise their own newly completed essays. Thus, in manipulating the writing of others similarly situated prior to the manipulation of their own writing, students develop an editorial objectivity that affects the strategies utilized in revising their own written products—both those strategies manifested during guided activities provided by writing instructors and, more importantly, those strategies appearing during the self-motivated pattern of alterations that recurs throughout the creation of written products.

As with any other method of teaching composition or with any other educational method per se, the antithetical models approach does have several inherent weaknesses that must be counterbalanced, however:

1. No matter how carefully models are selected, it may not always be possible to accommodate each and every difficulty of each and every student, primarily because disruptive idiosyncrasies are destined to appear in the written language of even the most homogeneous student populations. Rather than burden an

entire group with one writer's special problems, then, instructors must always be on the watch for those conceptual and linguistic misunderstandings that require individual attention in the form of marginal comments or one-to-one conference sessions.

2. No matter how carefully models are selected, students may still have difficulty in going beyond the superficial and in seeing connections between their own first drafts and these models, thus requiring initial guidance from instructors. The former problem can be solved by asking students to comment on content and organization as well as on grammar and mechanics and to comment on essays as a whole as well as on various segments. The latter problem can be solved by asking students to list, prior to the revision of their own essays, several specific classroom criticisms of the antithetical models that could also be leveled against their own writing.

3. No matter how carefully models are selected, much of their effect is lost if they are not introduced and analyzed immediately following the completion of students' first drafts and if final drafts are not begun immediately following the analysis of these models. Those instructors wishing, therefore, to provide copies of actual essays produced by the class at hand must be prepared, in time for distribution of models at the next class meeting, (a) to read all essays submitted in order to determine major common problems, (b) to select those essays best suited to serve as antithetical models, and (c) to provide for the typing and duplication of these essays. Step (c) can, of course, be omitted if suitable essays from past classes are available. Similarly, instructors must be prepared to return all first drafts, complete with any personal comments deemed necessary and any grades required in a particular writing program, at least by the first class meeting following the analysis of antithetical models, so that students can move smoothly from the analysis of samples to the analysis of their own written products.

Although it is obvious, then, that much careful preparation is necessary for the optimum use of antithetical student models, I

have found that long-range improvements both in student attitude toward revision and in the communicative strength of student writing itself--from which instructors as well as students obviously benefit--far outweigh any momentary inconvenience.

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SHOW AND TELL:
TEACHING COMPOSITION BY EXAMPLE

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Each fall one of the first things an instructor notices is that beginning composition students seem unable to follow the simplest directions about writing. For example, when the instructor tells the class to "write an exact description of this picture of a tropical beach," she will receive a sort of stream of consciousness outpouring about the perfect vacation from at least one student. Obviously the student has no idea what she is asking him to do. The exasperated instructor may grade the composition harshly and move on to the next item on the syllabus; or she may try to explain and repeat the assignment; or she may call in the badly confused student for a conference. Or, recognizing that human beings learn skills by imitation, the instructor may choose to write examples of the assignments herself to show students what she expects from them. If, in addition, she writes these examples under the same conditions as her students must write, both she and the students will learn a great deal about writing.

The average student, no matter how many competency tests he may have passed, often has no idea what his composition teacher is asking him to do when she says, "write a classification essay." He does not find the textbook examples either helpful or encouraging because they are longer or shorter than what he has been assigned; because they may use the contractions and first and second pronouns forbidden to him; because they are infinitely better than anything he can write. He knows that if he could write like Robert Penn Warren he would not be in Composition 101 in the first place. Bewildered, he wants someone, specifically the person who is going to grade his essay, to show him how, and even what, to write. When he reads a classification essay written by his instructor on the types of students she meets each quarter, the student is able to see for himself the

sort of organization and development the instructor wants from him. He has an easily outlined, obviously developed example to use as a pattern.

As the quarter advances and the student wrestles with various types of compositions--contrast, comparison, cause and effect--the student feels more comfortable having the instructor's written and explained examples to serve as models for his own writing. By the middle of the quarter, even the weak student can easily ask the instructor why she chose to use a certain pattern of organization in comparing the Civil and Boer Wars. When he learns that she chose time sequence because the composition is also an example of how to answer an essay question in history, he may decide to use this pattern in some of his own essays; or he may, in rejecting this plan, discover alternate methods of organization for himself. He learns, in short, that not only does the writer need a plan for organizing an essay but also that the writer may vary the plan because of subject matter. When the student begins to see for himself that his subject should determine how he chooses to write about it, he has begun to understand a central concept in both planning and revision.

The student who has learned to write from instructor-written examples is better able to understand revision for several reasons. Because he has become comfortable discussing the instructor's writing, he is better able to critique another student's work. When he critiques another student's work, he also learns to critique his own; thus, by the time the class is working seriously with revision, the student has learned that no paper is perfect, that even the instructor's efforts need revising. He sees for himself the reasons for, the process of, and the changes produced by revision when the instructor hands out photocopies of her own three drafts of a simple essay or else when she reworks a first draft, explaining to students why she is making the changes. The student can even suggest changes and ask questions, something he cannot do with a textbook example. During the process of revising an example, the student's discovery of ways to improve an essay may be as simple as changing a few words, combining sentences, substituting examples, or it may be as complex as rearranging the whole pattern or development or refocusing the original thesis, but the discovery is his own.

Inevitably any teaching method that helps students learn more quickly and effectively benefits the instructor as well.

Probably the most obvious benefit of writing examples for students is that the instructor can illustrate her directions. She can hold up a picture of a truck after she has passed out

two descriptions, one factual, expounding a clear topic sentence, and the other vague, full of misty, sentimental musings. When she asks the students to compare the descriptions with the picture and asks them which description would enable them to make a drawing of the truck, she has shown her students exactly what sort of descriptive paragraphs she expects them to write of their own pictures. By example she has defined exactly what she means when she tells them to write precise descriptions clearly introduced by a carefully worded topic sentence.

Because many institutions require that instructors teach students to write short, correct essays in a single class period, teachers of basic composition spend much time searching for topics that require no research and that can be adequately covered in forty-five minutes. By writing herself about the topics she chooses, the instructor can quickly determine which topics are feasible, which topics she herself can enjoy writing about, and which topics she can endure reading about while grading a hundred essays. In addition, by writing simple essays from her own topics, the instructor finds out what sorts of topics work best with what sorts of compositions; for example, one instructor tried to write a sample comparison/contrast essay in three hundred words and learned the difficulty of presenting a balanced development in that length. Now she splits her teaching of this form into contrast, comparison, and finally a longer essay of comparison/contrast. In the class discussion of her own written examples, she discovered that her students understood contrast more easily than comparison and that they were better able to make comparisons after they had written about contrasts. By the time they had examined and written both contrast and comparison essays, the students were eager to write a longer essay presenting both comparison and contrast.

Furthermore, the instructor who writes with her students on the same topics and under the same classroom conditions is less apt to demand perfection when she grades. She worries less about omitted words and messy handwriting because she too has searched for correct examples in a room overheated to 90°, has struggled with an awkward sentence that keeps rhyming while the garbage truck empties dumpsters outside the window, has been unable to check the exact meaning of a word because her time was almost up. When she has written examples under these conditions, the instructor becomes more tolerant and more realistic in grading her students' essays.

Under such conditions, writing bad examples for teaching purposes is simple. A determined instructor can put her bad examples to good use because, unlike most student essays which contain numerous, interrelated errors, her essays usually contain isolated errors. She may even deliberately incorporate some

errors into her examples, particularly errors with which her class is struggling. By using misleading titles, faulty introductions, monotonous sentences, or preachy conclusions--one at a time so that the error stands out clearly--the instructor forges the best possible tool for teaching her students criticism and revision of their own work. When she critiques her own work and shows how several methods of revision may correct errors, she shows the students how to critique and revise their own essays. By the end of the quarter, the instructor who writes examples will find that most of her students are readily able to diagnose problems in both her examples and other students' work. As a result, they are even able to critique and to revise intelligently their own essays instead of merely correcting the grammar.

Invariably this technique of the instructor's writing for and with her students raises objections. A primary, and seemingly valid, objection is that the students will only imitate the instructor's examples, rigid and simplistic as they are. This objection is valid only to a point. Students who are just learning to write are going to copy someone; surely the instructor is a better model than a politician, a sportswriter, a revivalist or an advertiser. Most students, as they acquire ability, are eager and anxious to go beyond the pedestrian models their instructor provides and are soon ready to profit from the more sophisticated textbook examples. The poor students may never progress beyond copying the instructor, but presumably they could do worse.

Another objection is that the instructor is too busy preparing lectures and grading papers to write an essay a week. Actually, writing and duplicating a sample essay saves time because the instructor who uses examples spares herself tedious hours of lecture, explanation, and correction in the long run. The value of using specially tailored material for examples more than offsets the disadvantages of weekly creation, and usually the teacher can use the material next quarter.

A third objection, more often felt than voiced, is that the instructor loses status if she submits her own writing to her students' critical eyes. But the average instructor should write well enough to present her students with a competent freshman essay, or she should not be teaching. Also, any mistakes she makes, as earlier noted, she can turn to teaching advantage. Moreover, most freshman students are so frightened, or at least so awed, of their instructors that they welcome small inperfections. What the instructor loses in dignity she gains in rapport.

Despite the slight bruising of the instructor's ego, students learn to write more quickly from an instructor who writes examples for and with them. These students have an acceptable model to work from so that they know from the beginning what sort of essays the instructor expects. Brighter students immediately see the possibility of bettering the instructor's efforts by making their own papers more subtle in form, while less competent students are able to master easy, yet acceptable, methods of organization and development. Most of all, students write better compositions because they are more confident. They know what to do; they realize that the instructor is in the classroom to help them do it; and they know that the instructor is open to any questions about writing they may have.

PROCESS MODELING: A BEHAVIORAL APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF WRITING

Debra Pearson,
Houston County (Alabama) Area Vocational Center

For centuries teachers have been concerned with finding effective methods for teaching composition. One of the oldest, most respected methods involves presenting students with classical literature as a basis for inspiration and imitation. Hundreds of years ago Latin students were asked to imitate the works of Seneca and Cicero; later, English writers imitated the revered Latin style. In 1759 English writer Edward Young wrote in his Conjectures on Original Composition that writers must "imitate ancient authors... Tread in (Homer's) steps to the sole fountain of immortality; drink where he drank:" (Abrams, 1974, p. 2436). A number of well-known writers, including John Milton and Robert Louis Stevenson, admit that they first learned to write by imitating the classics (Spencer, 1983, p. 38). Proponents of the prose models approach assume that the writer's aim is the emulation of an established, respected style of writing.

The prose models approach is still strongly advocated by many writing teachers, among them Tibbetts and Tibbetts (1978), who compare the refusal of the novice writer to learn from the master writer with the refusal of the medical intern to learn from the experienced surgeon (p. 51). However, the prose models approach has been the subject of criticism in much recent literature on the teaching of composition. Steve Graham (1982) found that composition research does not generally support the usefulness of prose models, and Cynthia Watson (1982) discovered that using models often results in writing that is awkward and artificial-sounding. A common argument against prose models is that they overwhelm students; they are too far removed from the students' writing abilities and problems (Judy & Judy, 1981; Murray, 1968; Watson, 1982). Donald Murray (1968) has found a

drawback in using literary classics for imitative purposes in that the rhetoric used in such works is often significantly dissimilar to the rhetoric of today (p. 107), while Judy and Judy (1981) have pointed out that the use of prose models may prevent students from developing their own unique style.

In light of the current debate over the use of prose models, I was particularly interested, when I first used models in my eleventh-grade English class, in determining the effect they had on my students' writing. The models I used included both paragraphs and entire essays, literary classics as well as contemporary professional writings. They ranged from articles in Sports Illustrated to descriptive paragraphs written by Mark Twain. In each assignment I asked students to imitate as closely as possible a particular style or technique that was demonstrated in the model. Although students enjoyed reading many of the models, the number of problems that cropped up when they attempted to imitate the works led me ultimately to abandon the approach in search of a better way to teach writing. I found that while such an approach works well with a few bright students who readily and enthusiastically make the cross-over from a prose model, the majority of students have difficulty making any kind of connection between a prose model and their own writing. In imitating the models, many of my students (like those of Watson) produced writing that sounded unnatural and artificial. Their writing lacked the sound of authenticity, for their voice was lost in that of the writer they were imitating. Some students could not do the assignments at all; they simply did not know how. I still ask my students to read prose models, because I am not convinced that students do not somewhat internalize information about writing through reading (information that I hope they produce and utilize when the need arises). But I no longer ask students for strict imitations of such models, primarily because the models do little to make them consciously aware that writing is a process. Giving a student a polished model to imitate is analogous to presenting him with a well-made shoe, handing him the parts of the shoe's mate, and asking him to construct a shoe of his own by studying the finished product. Prose models show students what to aim for, but they do not show them how to get there.

The prose models approach may have been well suited for the elite who were educated in Milton's day; however, for the masses that enter our classrooms nowadays, it is neither sensible nor practical. As a result of Public Law 94-142, which specifies that handicapped children be educated in the "least restrictive environment," teachers are faced more and more with the task of educating students who have serious learning problems. We will not do those students justice by concluding that they may never be able to write, nor can we do them justice by expecting them to imitate and to write polished essays that they haven't the

slightest idea how to produce. We need an approach to teaching composition that benefits students of every level of writing development.

In searching for an approach that might work for every member of my class, I turned to the field of educational psychology and decided to model the writing behavior I wanted from my students. Using a technique described in Donald Murray's A Writer Teaches Writing (1968), I wrote an essay on the chalkboard while my students looked on. This procedure gave them opportunity to see first-hand how an essay might originate (I had made a rough outline and a few notes in a corner of the board). They saw, too, how an essay might be developed and revised. Instead of showing them what a finished essay looked like, I showed them how an essay comes into being. To my surprise, the students' writing improved noticeably after only one exposure to the live modeling. As I began to use what I term "process modeling" on a routine basis, their writing improvement became still more pronounced. Not only did the students become more enthusiastic about writing, their tendency to revise what they had written increased dramatically.

I was seeing Albert Bandura's social learning theory in action. The crux of Bandura's neobehaviorist theory is that almost anything can be learned on a "vicarious basis through observation of other people's behavior" (Bandura, 1967, p. 78). Bandura also theorizes that "providing an appropriate (live) 'model' may accelerate the learning process" (p. 78; emphasis added). In other words, learning by imitation results in efficiency; students learn through observation what they would otherwise have to learn by trial and error. In a study conducted to assess the value of live modeling in teaching math skills, Dale Schunk (1981) concluded that modeling was more effective than "didactic instruction" (pp. 102-104). I was particularly encouraged by the shortcut in teaching time that process modeling offered me. Before I began practicing the technique, I spent a great deal of class time talking to students about the importance of revising. Still, the revisions they made were usually no more than corrections of mechanical errors. However, as they began as an integral part of the writing process imitating revision techniques that I was modeling, their revisions not only increased in number, but they included major structural changes—higher-order revisions that my students did not routinely make. What's more, I didn't have to say a word about revising; I simply showed them how.

Another major tenet of Bandura's social learning theory is that people imitate what they observe more readily if the model is rewarded for his or her behavior. Bandura's theory holds implications for the behavior of the person modeling the writing

process. For process modeling to be most beneficial, writing should appear rewarding in some way to the model. The model who presents writing as a pleasurable activity or an exciting challenge will obviously be more effective than one who throws up his or her chalk and quits when the writing gets tough. Muriel Harris (1983) has found that modeling yields optimum results when the model exhibits "friendly, agreeable behavior with frequent expressions of appreciation" (p. 80). Harris points out that teachers who are interested in modeling should not worry about being unable to perform well "in the glaring spotlight of student attention," for research indicates that the most successful models are not those who demonstrate a high level of mastery but those who begin at a level of performance similar to that of the student (p. 80).

Finally, Bandura's behavioral theory suggests that students need positive reinforcement for imitating the model's behavior. Teachers should encourage students throughout the writing process, but especially in the beginning of a process modeling program when students may not yet realize that writing holds its own rewards. Actually, reinforcement is a built-in feature of process modeling. Teachers who write with their students naturally interact with them more; students automatically receive more feedback. Writing with students has the added advantage of putting teachers in a better position to understand their students' writing difficulties--or the problems a particular assignment holds.

Teachers can model the writing process for an entire class using the chalkboard or overhead projector. Or the class may be divided into small groups, with the teacher sitting in with one group at a time and completing the assignment with the students. Harris (1983) uses modeling on a one-to-one basis in her remedial writing lab to help students overcome specific writing problems. After she identifies a student's problem, she writes for the student, modeling a technique for solving the problem. She then asks the student to write, copying her behavior as closely as possible (pp. 76-79).

Indeed, one of the most valuable features of process modeling is that it can be used successfully with students of varying degrees of writing ability. It is particularly useful with students who do not respond well to verbal cues. Such students are quite often near the bottom of the class; many of their past writing experiences have ended in failure. Because in a process modeling approach the focus is initially on the writing process and not on the finished product, these students feel safer in putting their ideas on paper. In addition, process modeling shows them that writing is hard work for everyone--that writing ability is not a talent bestowed on a

few privileged individuals, but a craft that anyone can learn. Along with everyone else in the class, these students begin to view their first draft not as an end product, but as a starting point.

Kenneth Kantor (1981) has said that unless teachers are willing to write with their students, no "methodology or curriculum" can help students improve their writing (p. 66). At one time I would have denounced Kantor's statement as extreme. But through process modeling I have found that students learn about the composing process more efficiently through observing a writer in action than by any other method. Through observing the writing process, they learn the true meaning of "revising," many of them beginning to make--for the first time--the more sophisticated, structural changes that are the mark of a good writer. When teachers--and not polished essays or literary classics--become models for imitation, students begin to see that writing is a dynamic force, a process with unlimited possibilities.

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1985 KCTE STUDENT WRITING CONTEST

Attention all high school English teachers. The January 15, 1985, postmark deadline for the 1985 KCTE Student Writing Contest will come quickly. Begin now to collect your best student writing. Include entries from your youngest writers, for students from all grade levels submit winning entries in all categories of the KCTE Student Writing Contest: poetry, short story and drama, critical essay, and vignettes and descriptions.

Be among those teachers who receive the KCTE certificates to present to student winners on Awards Day 1985. Watch your best writers glow as they view their writing in print in the 1985 Student Writing Issue of the Kentucky English Bulletin. Let them give your principal reason to praise good writing.

Be confident. Have each student to prepare the typed manuscript (clear copy), with title (repeated), category, name of student, grade, English teacher, school, and principal listed on a separate attached card (to facilitate coding for anonymous judging). Then avoid the headaches caused by snow days and other last minute disruptions by forwarding the writing now to the contest coordinator: Dr. Fran Helphinstine, UPO 1244, Morehead State University, Morehead, KY 40351.

NCTE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS IN WRITING, 1985

To encourage high school students in their writing and to recognize publicly some of the best student writers in the nation, the National Council of Teachers of English will give achievement awards in writing to over eight hundred students who will be graduated from high school in 1986. This marks the twenty-eighth consecutive year that NCTE has sponsored the Achievement Awards Program. The National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed the program on its advisory list of national contests and activities for 1984-85.

Information and nomination blanks have been sent to 18,400 high school English department heads and to members of NCTE's secondary section. Nominations must be sent to NCTE by January 23, 1985. For further information, write the Kentucky coordinator: Richard D. Freed, Department of English, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY 40475.

KCTE SPRING CONFERENCES

The KCTE Executive Committee has selected the Galt House, Louisville, as the site of both the 1985 and 1986 Spring Conferences. The dates for 1985 are March 15-16; for 1986, March 7-8.

In 1987, KCTE and the Greater Louisville Council of Teachers of English will host the Spring Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English, also at the Galt House, March 26-28.

Schedules and registration forms for the 1985 Conference will be mailed to all KCTE members. For additional information, write to Linda Johnson, Highlands High School, 2400 Memorial Parkway, Fort Thomas, KY 41075.

KENTUCKY ENGLISH BULLETIN

CALL FOR ARTICLES

The Kentucky English Bulletin is seeking articles for two special issues in 1985-86:

FALL 1985--NEW LOOKS AT GRAMMAR

No area of English teaching suffers as much from conventional wisdom--old and new--as grammar, in all senses of that word. Articles are sought that cut through conventional wisdom and take new looks at the place and use of grammar in teaching language, literature, and composition at all levels.

WINTER 1985-86--THE HIGH SCHOOL-COLLEGE CONNECTION

As part of the larger educational reform movement, new bridges are being built between high schools and colleges. Articles are sought that document or propose new efforts at cooperation between secondary and higher education in the teaching and learning of English.

Deadline for both issues is August 1, 1985, though inquiries after that date are welcome. Manuscripts should follow new MLA style, as well as the NCTE Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language, and should be sent, in single copies, to Ken Davis, Department of English, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506.

The Spring 1986 issue will consist of winning entries in the KCTE Student Writing Contest, so no need is anticipated in 1985-86 for articles on subjects other than those announced here.